

For Immediate Release  
Friday, March 14, 2014

## **Senate Passes Grassley-co-sponsored Resolution Marking Synthetic Drug Awareness Week**

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Senate has passed a resolution co-sponsored by Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa designating this week as National Youth Synthetic Drug Awareness Week.

“Congress and law enforcement work to get synthetic drugs off the streets but cynical manufacturers work all the time to put out new varieties,” Grassley said. “Public awareness is a large part of prevention. A product sold in a store or online isn’t necessarily safe and might be far from it. These drugs have had tragic consequences in Iowa. People should know the consequences and stay away from these products.”

Grassley co-sponsored the resolution with Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California. These states, like Iowa, have had problems with synthetic drugs. Grassley, Klobuchar and other senators worked toward the enactment of the *Synthetic Drug Abuse Prevention Act of 2012*, banning many iterations of synthetic drugs, including one associated with the death of an 18-year-old Iowan named David Rozga.

New versions of the drug emerge regularly, leaving the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to ban the new compounds using its administrative authority. Included among these drugs is a compound called “5F-PB-22,” which was blamed for the deaths of three young Iowans last year. 5F-PB-22 is officially banned, or scheduled, under DEA procedures. The final rule went into effect earlier this month.

Grassley is Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee and co-chairman of the Caucus on International Narcotics Control.

The text of the resolution is available [here](#). Grassley’s floor statement on the resolution follows here.

### **Floor Statement of Sen. Chuck Grassley on National Youth Synthetic Drug Awareness Week**

I am pleased to join Senator Klobuchar in cosponsoring a resolution designating the week of March 9, 2014, as National Youth Synthetic Drug Awareness Week. The abuse of synthetic drugs has grown rapidly in a very short amount of time. Calls into poison control centers concerning synthetic marijuana, also known as “K2,” doubled between 2010 and 2011, and remained elevated throughout 2012. Emergency room visits connected to synthetic marijuana use more than doubled, to 28,000 visits, from 2010 to 2011. In addition, other synthetic drugs commonly known as “bath salts” produced over 22,000 emergency room admissions.

The serious symptoms associated with synthetic drug use range from rapid heart rate, psychosis, and agitation – which may lead to suicide, cardiac arrest, or organ failure. In 2010, a constituent of mine named David Rozga committed suicide shortly after ingesting “K2” with his

friends. After smoking the drug, David became highly agitated. His friends calmed him down, and he decided to go home. Not long afterward, however, he committed suicide. David's death was one of the first in the U.S. attributed to synthetic drug use.

I worked with Senators Klobuchar, Schumer and Feinstein, along with many others, to place many of these terrible drugs on the list of Schedule I controlled substances. I am grateful that the Senate and the House worked together to pass the Synthetic Drug Abuse Prevention Act of 2012. Our efforts were an important step in allowing the Drug Enforcement Administration to begin enforcement actions against those who are poisoning our communities.

However, new synthetic drugs have emerged since the passage of that law. In fact, the Drug Enforcement Administration has moved to administratively place an additional 17 chemical compounds on the list of Schedule I narcotics in recent months. Included among these drugs is a compound called "5F-PB-22," which was blamed for the deaths of three young Iowans last year. Moreover, in just the past few days, police in Iowa have arrested six people and raided multiple stores in the Des Moines area for selling synthetic drugs. These tragic deaths and arrests of those pushing these substances underscore the ongoing need to raise awareness of these deadly drugs.

The good news is that people, including in my home state of Iowa, are fighting back against the scourge of synthetic drugs. The Rozga family has been active in sharing David's story. They have also started a website, [K2drugfacts.com](http://K2drugfacts.com), which creates a forum for other parents, friends, and people who have survived terrifying experiences with synthetic drugs to share their stories and spread the word that these drugs are destructive. Other anti-drug organizations and coalitions are raising public awareness in Iowa. For example, a local community group in Johnson County, Iowa called "Iowans Against Synthetics" has raised synthetic drug awareness throughout that county.

The National Youth Synthetic Drug Awareness Week resolution encourages other individuals and organizations throughout the country to continue their efforts to raise awareness about the deadliness of these drugs. I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution.